

ANNUAL ADMINISTRATION REPORT

OF THE

SIND FOREST CIRCLE

FOR THE YEAR 1896-97

WITH THE REVIEW THEREOF

BY THE

COMMISSIONER IN SIND.



Karachi:

PRINTED AT THE COMMISSIONER'S PRESS.

1897-98.

No. 927 of 1898.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

Commissioner's Office,
Camp Daulatpur, 5th March 1898.

Annual Administration Report of the Sind Forest
Circle for 1896-97.

Forwarded to Government.

The Acting Commissioner much regrets the delay in submitting his review, and he can only explain that, after being in the Press for over six weeks, the Conservator's report, which is dated the 9th November, was returned to him for examination and rectification of certain discrepancies, and the revised proofs only reached his office at the end of January. The further delay has been due to press of other work.

2. The net results of the changes in area show an addition of 3 square miles 535 acres or 2,455 acres to the total extent of forest under conservation. Of this area, which is exclusively "Reserved" forest, 2,221 acres or 3 square miles 301 acres were added by afforestation during the year. The remainder is due to rectification of mistakes explained by the Conservator.

The changes that occur under "Protected" and "Unclassed" are merely a transfer from the former of land which more properly belongs to the latter, and do not affect the total area. The whole of the additional area shown above was finally settled and notified during the year (paragraph 29). It is not understood how the areas lost by erosion and gained by accretion are dealt with. In last year's report, it was mentioned that 2,570 acres had been lost and 7,788 acres gained. The net gain did not enter into last year's totals, nor into the changes during the year detailed in paragraphs 19, 20 and 22 of the report. In the year 1896-97, 3,574 more acres were lost by erosion, of which 2,199 acres were valuable forest, and 17,922 acres are said to have been gained by accretion, though "they may not be handed over to the Department." The figures, perhaps, have hitherto been too vague to take into account, but the task of correcting the river frontage of the forest maps has now been undertaken, and it should not be difficult in future to give accurate details in Form 46.

3. In two years, 3,369 acres, over 5 square miles, of forest-bearing land have been lost. In return, the Department have gained an unknown quantity of alluvial deposit, comparatively little of which becomes a permanent accretion. The interests of the Department in obtaining due recognition of such accretion have been attended to, and claims have evidently been preferred with discretion. It is satisfactory to find that Rs. 5,380 worth of timber was saved from the "cutting" banks during the year. The distance to which erosion may extend can never be estimated, but the points at which the river is likely to be active during the ensuing inundation can generally be pointed out at an early date. At the threatened strips water carriage is more easily available than at any other time. It is hoped that a further improvement in this direction will be seen next year.

4. The details given in paragraph 31 of the report are not understood. The delay which the Conservator alludes to in his paragraph 32 will be enquired into, but it will be noticed that, of the areas entered under heading "Land to be settled under S. 7," the following—

			A.	G.
Sukkur	...	...	176	37
Hyderabad *	...	...	9,397	17
Jerruck *	...	...	124	29

* These added together equal A. 9,522-6.

appeared in paragraph 29 of the last report under the heading "Land to be notified under S. 19," about which the Commissioner remarked "The correspondence * * * is presumably in the Conservator's own office."

Regarding the 4,567.39 acres to be notified under S. 4, it is supposed that the Forest and Revenue officers have not yet formulated their proposals. Any delay there may have been on the part of the Revenue officers in settling lands notified under S. 4 during the past year may justly be excused, as for the greater part of the District season their energies were directed towards stopping the progress of the plague.

Demarcation, with which little progress was made during the year, amounted to 18 miles 673 yards of boundaries. The small outturn of work was unavoidable. Mr. Napier, the Demarcation Officer, was unable to devote more than a month and a half to it, as, when plague broke out, he was deputed on special duty with the Conservator's approval. Mr. Dasai has explained that there were other difficulties besides which hampered its progress. Only Rs. 183-5-0 were spent on demarcation. The smallness of the amount is partly due to the free labour given by zamindars and others in return for privileges and concessions they enjoy. The system of utilising the services of cattle breeders and others for repairing boundaries secured even better results than last year. No less than 14,375 boundary marks were put up and repaired, and 1,406 miles of boundary line cleared and kept in order. The economy effected by this very useful arrangement is estimated at Rs. 3,602. More repairs were necessary owing to the higher inundation of 1896.

5. The Working Plans office was at first in charge of Mr. Napier and subsequently of Mr. Dalal. The report gives the first complete year's record of the new division. The outbreak of plague was not only responsible for a change in the head of the office during the travelling season, but prevented the acquisition of a qualified staff. The operations were confined chiefly to the Sukkur and Hyderabad Divisions and the survey of the river frontage, which has already been alluded to. From the details given in paragraph 43, it appears that the Working Plans staff marked out 72 coupes, measuring 7,940 acres, and 67, measuring 8,898 acres, were also marked out by the Executive staff. In the recess season 378 copies of maps were prepared. As far as the Acting Commissioner can judge, the first year's work will prove very useful. The area of major Forest produce set apart for exploitation during the year was not so large as in the previous year, being 22,851 (*vide* paragraph 94) against a total of 31,349 acres. The whole of the area was sold in coupes to contractors, with the exception of 2,500 acres of small bahan timber, such as posts, rafters, &c., exploited under the selection method in the Hyderabad and Naushahro Divisions to meet the large demand in Hyderabad city.

6. Less progress was made in the cutting up of Reserves into compartments. As the Conservator has explained, the work was held in abeyance in view of the orders of Government regarding the postponement of all avoidable expenditure. Labourers were scarce, owing to the scare established by the plague, and the cost per mile for this work was consequently higher. The footnote to the table in paragraph 46 is evidently intended to explain the discrepancy between the figures therein and those in the table in paragraph 43 of last year's report. The total of the area cut up and the area remaining to be cut up agrees with the total area in paragraph 19.

7. During the year 60 new forest cases were taken into Court, which, added to the previous year's arrears of 22, made a total of 82 cases for disposal by Magistrates as against 92. Of these 52 only were disposed of as against 70 in the previous year, the number of cases pending being consequently larger. The percentage of failures, though still high, shows an improvement over last year. The percentage of failures in divisions where a few cases only were tried of course proves nothing. It might have been explained why so many (comparatively) cases were outstanding in the Hyderabad Division.

The reduction in the number of cases is stated to be partly due to the Honourable Mr. James' rules under Section 67, which seem to Mr. Dasai

to err on the side of leniency. His communication on the subject of these rules will be awaited. The number of cases compounded under Section 67 was 2,162 against 2,024 in the previous year—an increase of 138. The Sukkur Division is again conspicuous with a large number of cases of illicit grazing, attributed to greater vigilance on the part of the Protective Staff. The activity of the Range Officers in the Naushahro and Jerruck Divisions has had the opposite and more desirable effect of keeping down offences. In three-fifths of the cases, the compensation accepted did not exceed Re. 1. The number of cattle impounded from open forests was 11,367 against 11,567 shown in last year's report. The number in the Sukkur Division has further risen from 5,465 to 7,025. The number impounded from closed forests has more than doubled in this division, the total for which has risen from 9,321 to 16,759. All divisions show increases in the numbers of cattle impounded in closed forests, but none of the other three are very marked. The reason is clear from the table in paragraph 73, which shows that half the forest area in the Sukkur Division was closed against browsers, which are the chief offenders and at the same time the most destructive. The area closed to browsers in the Naushahro division amounted to 41 per cent. The Commissioner feels sure the Conservator will do his utmost to prevent hardship, and recognises the difficulty Mr. Dasai has to deal with, but both from the figures above stated and verbal complaints made to him on his recent visit to the Sukkur Taluka he is doubtful if some hardship does not exist there, and if along the broad line of forests, which entirely close in its eastern side, consideration is given when closing forests to the reasonable needs of the villagers adjoining. The remarks in paragraph 79 are interesting, and if Mr. Dasai's rules result in the prevention of squatting except in authorised places, they may also be of assistance to the Police in dealing with the very numerous cattle thieves in Upper Sind. The number of animals licensed for grazing at full and privileged rates was 577,316 as compared with 563,875. The Sukkur Division, however, shows a falling off, due to cattle disease, insufficient fodder in two sub-ranges and the closure of a larger area to browsers. The receipts from grazing fees amounted to Rs. 53,470 against Rs. 57,080. Free grazing was conceded to a smaller number of cattle during the year, *viz.*, 26,187 compared with 27,774—a fact which should have been explained, as more than 90 per cent. of free grazing is not a concession, but a right granted under settlement. The value of the free grazing is estimated at Rs. 27,632.

8. A more favourable river, which rose early and remained high longer, coupled with the rigorous measures taken in some parts of Sind, resulted in a marked decrease in the number of forest fires, the area which suffered being 3,975 only against 10,884 acres in the year 1895-96. The Commissioner notes with great pleasure that the efforts on the part of villagers, who readily and cheerfully gave assistance in extinguishing fires, were quite as strenuous as those of the Protective Staff. It will be noticed that 28 out of the 72 are attributed to the carelessness of passers through the forest. Other 20 were intentional, the object being to obtain grass, and 2 were malicious. Two cases of wilful damage by fire ended in conviction, and fines of Rs. 25 in one case and Rs. 5 on each of 2 offenders in the second were inflicted.

9. Mr. Dasai characterises the season as a "model" one for forest growth, the inundation being neither too high nor too low. The result was a general improvement in natural reproduction, which was considerably enhanced by the precautions taken against fires and injurious grazing. Artificial reproduction is confined almost entirely to broad-cast sowings on bare patches or felled coupes in all except the Sukkur Division. In this division, in the Kot Sultan Reserve, 687 A. in addition to the previous 201 A. have been planted with babul by the aid of zamindars, and the same system has been applied in another range. Under special rules, similar arrangements have been made for starting plantations on higher ground watered by lift. If carefully supervised, the system is a good one. Obviously, the crops raised are very paying, and it will need watchfulness to prevent abuses. The scale of penalties, however, which the Conservator has drawn up for neglect to protect the plantations are, as he must know, not legally enforceable, and it would have been better had he con-

sulted the Commissioner before introducing them. Presumably failure to pay would be followed by failure to renew the lease in the ensuing year, but apparently the rules contemplate a 4-years' lease, in which case, how would a defaulter in the second year be dealt with?

A number of small tali nurseries have also been started, and cultural operations for introducing better species of forest wood in some reserves have been carefully prepared.

Mr. Dasai has furnished interesting details of the cultural operations carried out in the different ranges during the year, which exhibit sufficiently the degree of success that attended them. The total area which was given out for cereal cultivation during the year was 3,954 acres, and the amount realised by assessment was Rs. 11,554.

10. The report shows a very satisfactory increase in the revenue realised from the sale of coupes to contractors. The average rate of prices was higher, being Rs. 8-0-4 per acre against Rs. 6-0-8 last year, and the receipts from the sales amounted to Rs. 1,63,248 as compared with Rs. 1,59,000, although the area sold was about 6,000 acres less than last year. Contractors were, however, hampered considerably in the exploitation and removal of timber owing to scarcity of labour occasioned by the prevalence of plague, even though wages were considerably enhanced. Mr. Dasai has detailed in paragraph 97 the difficulties with which he had to contend in carrying on the coupe contract system, and he is to be congratulated on the success he attained. The sales to and removals by others than coupe contractors show a great falling off.

The firewood and charcoal removed by other than coupe contractors amounted to 3,151,983 cubic feet as compared with 4,587,765 cubic feet. The decrease is attributed to the plague epidemic, but Mr. Dasai is incorrect in saying that plague decimated the population of any town in Upper Sind, least of all Shikárpur, where only a few imported cases occurred. The exploitation of bahan in Hyderabad did not reach one-half of the quantity stipulated for, and the revenue realised by sales of dead wood at ghats amounted to Rs. 27,089 as against Rs. 33,680. The only case in which an increase is observed, *viz.*, timber cut and removed by purchasers, is due to sales of wood from the erosion felling previously alluded to.

It is not, therefore, a matter of surprise that the revenue receipts were affected materially and the financial results of the year are somewhat unfavourable. The outstandings amounted to Rs. 73,533-15-3 at the end of the Forest year as compared with Rs. 56,180-5-10 at the end of the previous year. Mr. Dasai is, however, sanguine of being able to recover the deficits without difficulty. They were due to the special conditions of the year, and the Conservator is justified in not pressing for payment too rigorously. The Conservator has acted upon the suggestion of the Commissioner in last year's review and furnished statistics of the quantity of wood fuel supplied by coupe contractors to the N.-W. Railway and other Departments. The entire quantity amounted to 1,320,270 maunds, out of which the N.-W. Railway absorbed no less than 1,096,815 maunds.

11. Exclusive of minor Forest produce, details of which are given in the table in paragraph 133, the quantity of timber and fuel removed from forests by all agencies was 18,146,461 cubic feet against 24,306,258 in the previous year.

12. The receipts and expenditure of the past three Forest years are given in the following table:—

	Receipts.	Expenditure.	Difference.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1894-95...	6,79,823	4,17,757	2,62,066
1895-96...	4,65,745	2,34,807	2,30,938
1896-97...	3,12,297	1,34,209	1,78,088

The decrease in the net surplus of the year as contrasted with 1895-96 is Rs. 52,850, the difference between 1894-95 and that year having been Rs. 31,128. The percentage of expenditure at the same time fell from 50 to 43 per

cent. The receipts have been fully discussed. Little comparison can be made of items of expenditure. The cost of establishment was higher, presumably owing to the formation of the Working Plans Division, which was under a separate officer for part of the year.

13. The forms asked for in Government Resolution No. 8582, dated 25th November last, have not been submitted by the Conservator, who writes that he understood they did not apply to the Sind Circle. The appointment of the Special Forest Settlement Officer ceased a couple of years back, and there is little or no expenditure to show under the head of "Forest Settlement." A small area in each division, which was notified under Section 4 of the Indian Forest Act in the last and preceding years, has not as yet been declared Reserved Forest, and the Assistant or Deputy Collectors who have been appointed Forest Settlement Officers have not furnished any details as to the progress of the enquiries they have made. The Survey party of the Government of India has not yet commenced its operations in the Forest areas of the Sind Circle, nor has any survey of Forests been made by local officers.

14. The Acting Commissioner concurs with Mr. Dasai in his opinion that Sind has lost two zealous officers by the transfer of Messrs G. M. Ryan and B. H. Dalal. Mr. Shaukiram, who holds the Sukkur Division, has maintained the reputation he earned in Hyderabad, and Mr. Napier has been specially mentioned by Mr. Dasai; and the Acting Commissioner only desires to add that, although the year has been one not unattended by difficulties,—notably (1) the plague, which, as explained by the Conservator in his 137th paragraph, paralysed to a considerable extent the trade in timber by causing at once a dearth of labour and an immense decrease in the demand for material, with a consequent accumulation of stock and inability on the part of the contractors to realise their profits, and (2) those still attending the new coupe contract system, which, however, show signs of disappearing,—the report bears clear testimony of careful and successful administration.

R. GILES,
Acting Commissioner in Sind.

No. 3141 of 1897-98.

From

THE CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS,
SIND CIRCLE,

To

THE COMMISSIONER IN SIND.

SIND FOREST CIRCLE OFFICE,
Camp Miani, 9th November 1897.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual Administration Report of the Sind Forest Circle for the year 1896-97, together with its subsidiary statements.

2. It is to be regretted that the report is late this year, also. The sickness of the Divisional Forest Officer, Naushahro, and his only English-knowing clerk caused a delay of about a month in the submission of the divisional report, and some of the references calling for information, required to be incorporated in the Circle report under your orders as well as those of Government, were not replied to till yesterday.

3. With the consent of the Accountant General, Form No. 61 for the Forest and the Financial year has been altered and initialled wherever the figures were found to be incorrect.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

F. R. DASAI,

Conservator of Forests,

Sind Circle.